



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region Three Citizen's Advisory Committee Fish, Wildlife & Parks R3 Headquarters – Bozeman February 27, 2014

Members Present: Dennis Nelson, Cale Christiansen, Jill McMurray, Ken Sinay, Rick Grady, David Gibson, Dan Crismore, Mike Dailey, Norm Bishop, Bill Mealer, Ray Gross, Mike England, Tom Helm, Harold Johns

FWP Present: Christine Marozick, Andrea Jones, Sam Sheppard, Pat Flowers, Jen Knarr, Ray Heagney

Public Present: Laura Lundquist (Chronicle), Abby Dennis (Madisonian), Dan Nelson (son of CAC member Dennis Nelson), Glenn Hockett

Agenda

Welcome remarks and introduction of new members, roundtable, public comment

Leroy Mehring: Disappointed with new fishing statewide plan. R3 was very limited in information presented. No mention of Madison, Jefferson, no lakes, Clark Canyon. No information on fish planted anywhere. R3 is blue ribbon area of the country and there was very little mentioned. Very poor for R3 compared to other regions.

When are we going to do anything with Harrison Lake? It has gone to pot for several years. We need to plant some salmon or something. According to fisheries report, I assume you've done nothing.

Pat: I think we are managing Harrison to maintain the fishery. I am not in a position to respond. I would ask you to speak with Travis Horton, the Fisheries Manager. I think there are some good things in the fisheries plan, such as the restoration of the Westslope.

Leroy: Kudos to the department for limiting the doe licenses.

Harold: During last administration, one of big concerns was money spent for ranches on the Highline. Questionable value to spend \$5 million up there. Heard gossip it was good ol' boy thing. Is that correct?

Pat: That is not my understanding. This is the Milk River Ranch, correct?

Harold: Good. Also just heard of another expenditure, 6'-8' fences in Park county being built (brucellosis) with our sportsmen dollars. Still out for public comment. Same thing here where this is being slipped through without anyone knowing. It is time something be done with the commissioners.

Pat: Add to another agenda – a discussion on how we are trying to manage brucellosis in elk. It is a huge issue in this region.

Milk River Ranch – Region 6 – that purchase was made under last governor at the end of his term and was super controversial. Fast tracked. Commissioner Dan Vermillion spoke to this CAC at one point and gave a very good explanation for that purchase. For anyone wanting to speak him, he would be happy to explain.

Fencing in Paradise Valley - we adopted in the last year recommendations for a committee that gave us guidance on how to manage brucellosis in elk. Suite of tools they thought appropriate for managing risk of brucellosis in elk and transmission. That working group was deciding what tools to apply and where. It was discovered in the Paradise Valley that it was elk, not bison that were transmitting brucellosis. Had several public meetings, which were attended by mostly landowners, not a lot of sportsmen.

Harold: Is the genetic information open to the public?

Pat: I haven't seen that work done for the last 2-3 infections. The circular grid shows the genetic signature of the livestock and elk and the proximity to each other.

The proposal from a public meeting to separate cattle from elk, it made sense to carry that forward to the commission.

Leroy: As I understand open range laws, if you don't like neighbor's cattle on your property, you fence them out. We shouldn't spend sportsmen money keeping our elk away from their cows.

Bill: How big of a fence can you put up?

Pat: You can keep them out, but you can't trap them in.

Rick Grady: Fish and Game will give money for materials to protect hay. Will not pay for labor, just materials.

Pat: We still pay for game damage assistance, if you allow hunting on your property. Sportsmen dollars.

Tom: Access is a big passion of mine. We seem to have a problem in our area of getting and retaining game wardens. Why can't we seem to hold them there? It's a real issue in our area.

Sam: We've run into this over the state over the last several years. The department is addressing this. Retention can also be a problem. This has led us to reevaluate our hiring practices and who we are hiring for these jobs. At times they've been from other enforcement agencies. Some of those have not been able to handle the transition and change of pace. It is definitely different from most law enforcement agencies, and we are relooking at who we hire to fill these positions.

Tom: Pay component is a big part of it?

Sam: It can be. A lot of our wardens do the work for what it is. It's not just money but job satisfaction.

Mike: From my experience with readers and other people in the business and my personal conversations, biggest issue as of late is access. People are really concerned about losing access. I hope that gets explored in this venue.

Ray: I really appreciate being on this council. I'd like to applaud Dan Vermillion, he's been a real champion for sportsmen in this state. Big Hole and Beaverhead are real gems, seen a lot more people coming to enjoy resident's days. Access is critical. I'd like to see more of an effort between state and federal agencies in pursuing more access. Access that has been used for years is being closed off. Anything that can channel more funds to block management, such as donations when buying licenses. Kudos – Matt Jaeger and his team did a great job on Poindexter Slough. Great project.

Norm: *Quotes Aldo Leopold.* Keeping wolves at arbitrary minimum will never let us see natural role. I will be raising questions about how we are managing the population of wolves. I am happy to email any documents I will be quoting from. nabishop@q.com

Mike Dailey: Chadbourne Diversion – only thing remains to be done is a sign to warn rafters there is a dam ahead. That will be done in the next month or so. I want to thank everyone involved in that.

Dan: Still pushing for raising lion quota. Love having a new biologist. He's doing a marvelous job, great at talking to the public.

Rick: Concerned about access. Department is facing severe funding problems. Encourage everyone to get engaged in public meetings for block management, habitat Montana, conservation easements. These are all going to the legislature and we need to be involved. Hats off to the wardens, we're currently short 8 wardens, where does the money come from? Kudos to FWP for engaging different people throughout the public to such a high degree. CAC, PL/PW.

Ken: Encourage respectful confrontation and discussion. I consider riparian habitats to be least protected. Habitat restoration has great potential in Montana. Functional role of wolves has been somewhat forgotten in media. We simply have a limited amount of habitat where these things can live. Would like a future discussion on habitat available for bison. Grizzlies are on the verge of being delisted. Are we going to have a hunt? There will be huge public opinion. Worth talking about. General public

wants to have new ways to experience wildlife. Don't want to lose the resources we have. Responding to public attitudes is the big issue.

Jill: What is role of habitat restoration for FWP?

Pat: More so for a fisheries perspective. Poindexter, Sixteenmile. On our own WMA's, we do some restoration work. Largely those are in the condition we want them, intensive restoration isn't necessary.

Dennis: Interest in recruitment of young men and women into what we're doing. Quality habitat, access to land. How much control of sportsmen dollars do you actually have? Exciting to hear different points of view presented in this group. Look forward to learning all from all of you.

Recognition of departing CAC member Leroy Mehring

Explanation of new issue-card assignment to CAC members

Statewide Issues

Licensing & Funding Advisory Council progress report & Choices video

Leroy: This is all dependent on the legislature. We're the sportsmen, we're paying for this, we need to tell them we want this.

Rick: Now's the time to get engaged in these meetings. We've got to support the department. The four-year cycle is critical.

Unlocking State Lands program explanation

Dennis: What's your response to this program?

Pat/Andrea: We just opened it up.

Changes to requirements for Permits to Hunt from a Vehicle (PTHFV)

Dan: Have you thought about a temporary permit?

Sam: It has come up. It wasn't addressed in this last session.

PL/PW Council, block management audit program

Rick: I know that council came up with 5 issues. Alan Charles has done a great job.

Ray: Could we create a listserve for this group so we can all communicate about these issues?

Harold: I would like to see a list of topics coming down the road that affect sportsmen that are important. So you have time to talk to your community about the topics.

Ray: The general public doesn't get the information. I don't think the general public knows what's going on.

Rick: Biggest thing is funding. Out of state residents are done paying. Residents need to pay more. Nonresidents are going to go to Colorado or somewhere else.

Ken: Right now this council is addressing license fees. There's a lot of people out there from the general public who are not hunting or fishing, but are enjoying the natural resources.

Ray: There are a lot of people who would like to donate additional fees, but there is no way for them to do that. I think there's an opportunity to get some funding there.

Ken: There are a lot of wolf advocates who would like to make a contribution, if a campaign could be established, to contribute to the resource.

Sam: There's a mechanism right now, buying a license. But a lot of people say they wouldn't ever hunt or support hunting.

Pat: There are a lot of people who aren't consumptive users who would like to contribute. There's a sequential approach, sportsmen, then finding a mechanism to bring nonconsumptive users in. Several of us have told them, if you want an equal seat, you have to pay. It's just the way the system works, if you value wildlife, you need to contribute to the management of it.

Jen: What about a "Friends of" kind of group, similar to the "Friends of Avalanche Center." They get a lot of donations.

Pat: Fish, Wildlife & Parks' foundation collects money and funnels that back to us. They are in the process of rebranding.

Performance audits are a really important part of what we do. Positive in that way. Sometimes they are spot on, sometimes we disagree with their conclusions. Next audit is on our game damage program.

Fisheries Projects Updates

Poindexter Slough & Sixteenmile Creek

Fishing Access Site capital improvement projects – Ray Heagney

Ray Gross: Lyon's FAS – I heard they were going to replace that as part of the grayling deal.

Pat: It was a recommendation from an advisory committee to add a boat ramp.

Wildlife Program Updates

Hunting regulations adopted changes for 2014 & 2015

Bill: How much would you up bison quota?

Andrea: It could go up to 200. This year will still be 80, with 16 going to tribes. We chose to move conservatively. If we upped the number too much, we could be putting a lot of hunters in a small area, could be a lot of conflicts with landowners, tribes.

Bill: This was managed poorly from a national standpoint in the 90's. This could be a great economic opportunity for those communities.

Pat: We're reliant on when the bison decide to move. Traditionally, bison don't come out until after January 1. I agree it would be great to have a broader hunt period, but we're limited by movement.

Madison bighorn sheep transplant delay

Leroy: This is a constant problem with sheep herds. Department does not let enough hunting happen. Every time herd gets over 200, starts having problems. We should be taking 50-60 out of these herds by hunting.

Pat: We did offer additional ewe permits. It's a difficult herd to hunt. When they are down on the road is out of hunting season. During hunting season, they are far back and hard to reach.

Bill: I'm not sure ewe permits will do it. We need to have young ram permits.

Pat: Taking out ewes will take out the rams they would produce, so taking out ewes is pretty effective.

Bison EA, 2013-14 hunt & management activities

Bill: How many votes do you have vs. how many the DOL has?

Pat: It's not a matter of votes. I just hope we can come to a consensus that everyone can agree on.

Bill: Bull bison tags for out of state or international hunters could make the department a lot of money.

Pat: If we have year round bison out in the Taylor Fork for instance, they will be visible to the public. We'll be able to hopefully manage them via hunting. Will be revising the Yellowstone Interagency Bison Management Plan beginning in March.

Bill: Why Lewistown? There is no tourism there compared to Gallatin county or anywhere in SW Montana.

Pat: It's the middle of the state. Anywhere we put bison will be controversial.

Mike: Bison issue is very political. In a perfect world, would FWP want full control over bison management?

Pat: My own opinion is that as long as there is brucellosis in that herd, there is a role for DOL. I won't comment on where that balance should lie, that's prescribed in statute. I think they have an important seat at the table. Probably the bigger debate is how big a part they should have.

Harold: I understand there is no documented case of bison giving brucellosis to a cow. We're looking at disturbing a livelihood that's been around for generations.

Pat: The only place I'm aware of that bison transmitted brucellosis to a cow was in an experimental setting. But all the vectors are there. It's clear that they can.

Ken: What amount of land and how accessible is it for the herd moving north out of the park? It seems like Eagle Creek is suitable habitat. Is the area north of Royal Teton Ranch accessible to bison?

Pat: Yes. IBMP current goal is 3,000. Current population is 4,600. Park drafted a plan including hunters and used the trap to remove bison. All members of IBMP committed to this process.

Andrea: We've got enough ideas from the roundtable, so I'll send out the agenda for next meeting earlier. Next meeting will be May 14.

Public Comment:

Glenn Hockett: We've been very involved in bison issue, so good to hear discussion. FWP and DOL did a wonderful job on Bison EA. Encouraged all IMBP departments to look for additional habitat. Important for everyone to know and contact governor and ask, "What is the conflict?" Important to manage it as a wildlife species. Wild bison are wildlife. FWP should be in charge of wild bison. We need to get bison in the realm of elk, not elk in the realm of bison. FWP should be authority, not that they shouldn't cooperate with DOL.

Topic ideas for future meetings:

Cherry Creek

Westslope cutthroat in Missouri River drainage – invite Pat Clancy

Block management , PL/PW status

License& Funding Committee status

Commissioner come and talk to us about fencing on private land.

December meeting still have legislators come present their FWP proposals

Discussion on how we are trying to manage brucellosis in elk in R3

If grizzlies are delisted, will there be a hunt? Public will have opinions on that.